

## **ON THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

**Adopted by the Session – December 2014**

The goodness and creativity of God in Creation is never more manifest than in His creation of both men and women in His image (Genesis 3:21-25). Rather than filling the world with a monochromatic blandness, He has blessed humanity with the wonderful differences in males and females. The roles of men and women are beautifully complementary in the family and in the church. In both of these God-ordained spheres, men are commanded to follow Christ in laying down their lives to serve their wives in the family (Ephesians 5:25-33). In the same way, elders and deacons are to lay down their lives in service to the Body of Christ (Acts 20:28-32). Wives are called to lovingly submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24), in the same way that all members of a congregation should submit in the Lord to their leaders (Hebrews 13:17).

The Session of Christ Covenant Church believes the Bible to be clear in its teaching that the offices of rule and teaching in the Church are to be filled by men (1 Timothy 2:12). These are the offices of minister, elder, and deacon.

This position should not be misconstrued as depreciating the wonderful giftedness of the women of our congregation. Indeed, we believe that they will most flourish when they are joyfully filling the countless roles Biblically open to them in the life of the Church. Further, the Session encourages our thinking on specific decisions to be shaped by Scripture; neither pre-modern culture nor current culture should be normative.

Roles in the life of the congregation that do not involve teaching or direct ecclesiastical authority should be filled by the most qualified and available people, regardless of gender. So long as the authority of the Session is clearly acknowledged (needful, of course, for both genders), women may fill roles such as Church Treasurer, Committee Chairmanships, and other service areas.

We believe the Bible clearly teaches that wives are to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, et al.) It is a gross misunderstanding of Scriptural teaching when this principle is extended to the distorted notion that every woman must submit to every man.

Specifically, women may teach classes of boys through the eighth grade. While this age level is admittedly arbitrary, we believe it is appropriate that teaching be primarily by men beginning at the stage when young men begin to think of women in terms other than maternally.

The Session welcomes opportunities to clarify and apply these principles to specific situations in the Church.

Finally, the Session affirms and endorses The Danvers Statement of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and commends CBMW's resources as helpful in thinking through these issues.

### **THE DANVERS STATEMENT:**

In December, 1987, the newly-formed Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood met in Danvers, Massachusetts, to compose the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Prior to the listing of the actual affirmations that comprise the Danvers Statement, we have included a section detailing contemporary developments that serve as the rationale for these affirmations. We offer below the both the "Rationale" and "Affirmations" portions of the Danvers statement to the evangelical world, knowing that it will stimulate healthy discussion, hoping that it will gain widespread assent:

## THE DANVERS STATEMENT:

**Rationale:** We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.”

**Affirmations:** Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
  - a. In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  - b. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
  - a. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
  - b. In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.